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SEVENTH-DAY CHRISTIANS.

THE great Protestant principles of the "right of private judgment," and of the "Bible alone as the religion of Protestants," naturally produced a great variety of private judgments and conflicting convictions; some of which were embodied in sects which have been often misunderstood and misrepresented, sometimes injuriously extolled, but only rarely studied without bias and impartially appreciated.

In that rare old book, a copy of which is now lying before me, entitled *England's Teares for the present Wars*, published in 1644, and dedicated "to the City of London," there are some vigorous lamentations over the political and religious condition of the country, and the causes of the Civil War. The land is personified and represented as mourning for the "furious storme that powers upon her now, accompanied with thunder and universal fulgurations." She tells of "the fatal cloud wherein this storme lay long engendring, though, when it began to condense, at first it appeared but *as big as a hand*, yet by degrees it hath spread to such a vast expansion, that it hath diffused itself through all her regions; and obscured that faire face of heaven which was used to shine upon her." But her most bitter and sorrowful tears are wrung out by the troubles of religion,—“That reverend lady, that Queene of Soules and Key of Heaven” is mourning because “that seamlesse garment of unity and love which our Saviour left her for a legacie should be torn and rent into so many scissures and sects by those who would make that coat which she wore in her infancy to serve her in her riper

years." The country hears religion "cry out at the monstrous, exorbitant liberty that almost every capricious mechanic takes to himself to shape and forme what religion he list; for the world is come now to that passe, that the taylors and shoemakers may cut out what religion they please; the vintner and tapster may broach what religion they please; and the blacksmith may forge what religion he please." This was hardly a true statement of the case even at the time, inasmuch as the very men referred to chose for themselves not just what pleased their fancy, but what they found, or thought they found, prescribed and commanded in the Book which they received as the very word of God confirmed and interpreted by the inward voice, which many of them devoutly believed to be also the word of God speaking to them that day. And this ancient writer, who lived in the very midst of the things he was describing, goes on to shed more tears, or represent the country as doing so, because "while some had runne mad from excesse of knowledge" religious people had "gone mad now a dayes out of too much ignorance." We should rather say that their errors arose from too much enthusiasm and misguided faith; and that he who could see no more in the ideas that were fermenting in men's minds than some "caprichio of the braine, termed tendernesse of conscience, or the frantick fancy of some shallow-brained sciolist," was himself ignorant through inability to read the signs of the times. There was not a sectarian movement of any sort that had not some ideal, or ideals, some dream or vision, false or true, of better things that might be realized in church and state by united fellowship and action.

Among the most remarkable of the sects of the Stuart and Commonwealth period were the "Sabbatarians," or "Seventh-day men," and the "Fifth Monarchy men." Two-hundred and fifty years ago, and down to the beginning of the present century, there were in London, and some other parts of the country, comparatively large and flourish-

ing congregations who regularly assembled for worship and instruction on every Saturday, giving up all work and business on that day and regarding it as in a special sense the Lord's day, the holiness and rest of which could not be violated by any temporal work or pleasure without committing sin. Very few people are aware that there is in London now a remnant of one of these Sabbatarian churches, consisting of a few respectable people who meet every Saturday afternoon for worship, conducted in the usual nonconformist way, in an old chapel up a court in Eldon St., Moorfields. Impelled by curiosity—I hope of a legitimate kind—I sought them out a few months since. They did not number more than twenty persons, all told; but I learned that they had obtained the services of a minister from America where some of the sects, begun in England, but almost or quite extinct here now, still exist in comparatively flourishing conditions. Not only have they been favoured with the services of an able minister, understood to be a learned scholar and a devout believer in the Seventh-day Sabbath, but they have hopes that their numbers will increase and that the true Sabbath will be generally kept in London yet.

How strange and thought-provoking it was to sit in the little old meeting-house entirely built in, save by the narrow passage that leads to its door, by vast piles of commercial buildings, and listen to the subdued roar of the traffic in the city streets, and feel the contrast between the actual world of London, with all its immeasurable activities and labours then in full progress, and the little company gathered there, separating themselves from all the rest of the Christian world solely on the ground that they hold the observance of the seventh day as a holy sabbath according to the Fourth Commandment to be one of the inviolable moral laws of God, and eternally binding on all the peoples of the earth! Strange, too, it was to remember that two hundred years ago there was a London merchant named Joseph Davis, who so believed in this pious opinion

that he had suffered imprisonment in a dismal cell of Oxford Castle on account of it, and who when he died endowed that congregation, to which he belonged, with nearly all his property, consisting of the Manor of Little Maplestead in Essex, with almost all the land in the parish, including the great tithes of the entire village and the "right of presentation" to the incumbency. Joseph Davis bought the church property at Maplestead at its market value, and by his will left it so that ultimately it became the private endowment of the "Seventh-day" congregation. I confess, however, that for me the chief interest of the little congregation meeting in Eldon St. is purely historical; and even while the worship was proceeding I could not help my mind dwelling on persons and scenes connected with its past, with which a liking for researches in by-paths of church history has made me tolerably familiar. The church, as it is still called, only recently migrated to Eldon St. Its former place was in Mill Yard, Goodman's Fields.

Readers of Mr. Walter Besant's novel, *All sorts and conditions of Men*, will remember that one of the most interesting characters is Miss Rebecca Armitage, whose father is the minister of a little meeting-house belonging to the "Seventh-day Independents," situated in Redman's Lane. In one of the chapters there is an almost perfect picture of the Mill-Yard Seventh-day Baptist chapel as it was, and of the little congregation and its eccentric minister. Mr. Besant fully understands what the place and its congregation stand for:—

"Above the reading platform in this little chapel they have caused to be painted on the wall the Ten Commandments—the Fourth emphasized in red—with a text or two bearing on their distinctive doctrine. As for the position taken by these people, it is perfectly logical and, in fact, impregnable. There is no answer to it. They say, 'Here is the Fourth Commandment. All the rest you continue to observe. Why not this? When was it repealed and by

whom?' If you put these questions to Bishop or Presbyter, he has no reply; because that law never has been repealed. Yet, as the people of the connexion complain, though they have reason and logic on their side, the outside world will not listen, but goes on breaking the commandment with light and unthinking heart."

The chapel was, some ten or twelve years since, demolished to make room for railway extension. "Goodman's Fields" in which it really stood is, or rather was, near the Minories and not far from the Tower of London. That quaint old historiographer, John Stow, in his *Survey of London* (date 1598), tells us that "Here on the south of the Abbey (Convent of Nuns of the order of St. Clare called 'Minories') was for sometime a farm belonging to the said nunnery; at the which farm I, myself, in my youth have fetched many a pennyworth of milk, and never had less than three ale-pints in the summer, nor less than one ale-quart in the winter for one half-penny, hot from the cow as the same was milked and strained. One Trollope, and afterwards Goodman, were the farmers there and had thirty or forty kine to the pail."

As one treads the crowded streets of the Minories now, and loses his way, perhaps, among the labyrinth of massed buildings, it seems almost impossible to realize that here once were green pastures and grazing kine where milk "*hot from the cow and strained*," could be bought at the rate of a half-penny per three pints. Do dairymen "strain" their milk now we wonder? Stow goes on to tell us that "Goodman's son, being left heir thereof, let out the ground first for grazing of horses and then for garden plots, and lived like a gentleman thereby. He lieth buried in St. Botolph's church."

The original place of worship of the Seventh-day Congregation, however, was not in Goodman's Fields, but in Bullstake Alley, near what is now the Whitechapel Road. What this locality was at the time may be gathered from Stow's description of the "suburbs without

Aldgate": "And without the barres (approaches to Aldgate, or Old-Gate, one of the principal gates of the city, still called by the same name) bothe sides of the streete bee pestered with cottages and allies even up to Whitechappel Church, and almost half a mile beyond it into the common field; all of which ought to lie open and free for all men. But this common field, I say, being for some time the beauty of this city on that part, is so incroched upon by building of filthy cottages, and with other purprestors¹ inclosures, and laystalles², that, all proclamations, and Acts of Parliament, made to the contrary, notwithstanding, in some places it scarce remaineth a sufficient highway for the meeting of carriages and droves of cattell; much less is there any faire, pleasant, or wholesome way for people to walke on foot; which is no small blemish to so famous a city, to have so unsavoury and unseemly an entry, or passage, thereunto." It was in one of these "allies" that the Seventh-day Chapel stood, at which in 1661 a certain John James was the minister, of whose tragic history we shall have to tell further on.

We turn now to sketch as briefly as perspicuity will allow the rise in England of the Sabbatarianism which led to the formation of the Seventh-day Churches, all of which undoubtedly showed certain *judaizing* tendencies.

In 1595 Dr. Nicholas Bound, a Church of England divine, published a book on the Sabbath question, which soon drew much attention. It became, in fact, a "book of the day." The opinions maintained in it are briefly these:—(1) That the Fourth Commandment is moral, and of perpetual obligation. (2) All other observances in the Jewish Church, such as ceremonies, sacrifices, &c., are done away; this is so changed that it remaineth. (3) The rest ought to be peculiar rest; "a most careful, exact, and precise rest," says Fuller, the Church historian. The strength of Bound's

¹ "Purprestors"—so persons were denominated who enclosed and appropriated to themselves public or common land.

² "Laystalles," heaps of dung and other refuse matter.

argument, it is almost needless to say, lies in the assertion that Sabbath observance is one of the Ten Commandments, all of which are perpetual and of equal authority. His Sabbath is the Jewish observance, changed only as regards the day of the week, and in the greater severity of its abstentions and petty interdicts. Scholars are not to study, nor lawyers to practise on the Lord's Day. Officers of the law ought to be restrained from exercising their functions; and justices of the peace are not to examine causes, &c., on that day.

Only one bell should be rung on the Sabbath. No solemn feasts nor wedding dinners ought to be made (except by "knights and gentlemen of quality," in whose favour an exception is characteristically made). All amusements, &c., lawful on other days, are to be forborne. No one is even to talk or speak of pleasures or any worldly matters. "It is almost incredible," says Fuller, "how taking this doctrine was, partly because of its own purity, and partly for the eminent piety of the persons who maintained it. So that the Lord's Day, especially in corporations, began to be most precisely kept; people becoming a law unto themselves, and forbearing such sports as were yet by statute permitted; yea, many rejoicing at their own restraint herein. On this day the stoutest fencer laid down the buckler; the most skillful archer unbent the bow, counting all shooting beside the marke; may-games and morrish dances grew out of request; and good reason that bells should be silent from jingling about men's legs, if their very ringing in steeples were to be adjudged unlawful. Some were ashamed of their former diversions, like children, grown bigger, blushing themselves out of their rattles and whistles."

But, it may be asked, did nobody inquire whether keeping the first day of the week holy was quite the same thing as keeping the seventh or the very day which the Creator had blessed and hallowed? Certainly, there were people who questioned this; and when they were

told that the day had been changed, they asked in vain for a satisfactory answer to the question when, and by whose authority, it had been done. This brings us to the rise of the "Sabbatarian Dissenters," or "Seventh-day Men."

In 1628 Theophilus Bradbourne, "a minister in Suffolk," published a book on the Sabbath question, dedicated to King Charles I. It was entitled, *A Defence of the Most Ancient and Sacred Ordinance of God, the Sabbath Day*. In it he maintained the usual affirmations as to the morality and perpetual authority of the Fourth Commandment; but denied that Sunday was the right Sabbath day. Keeping the first day holy, he declared to be only "will-worship and superstition." It was the seventh day and no other that God had hallowed, and therefore all who worked or played on Saturday were Sabbath-breakers; Sunday being an ordinary working-day. In all probability Bradbourne was a Presbyterian minister.

Bishop White says that, in publishing his work, "he proceeded after the rule of the Presbyterian principles, one of the most rigid of which was: That all religious observances and actions, and the ordering and keeping of holy days, must have a special warrant and commandment in the Holy Scriptures; otherwise the same are superstitions." Bradbourne seems to have been confident that, if the orthodox belief in the Scriptures was right, his argument was a triumphant and unanswerable one. He not only dedicated his book to the king, but in it he admonished the bishops as to their duty in the matter, and professed his willingness to suffer martyrdom for his opinion. He defied his adversaries to answer him, and was brought before the High Commission Court, sometimes confounded with "The Star Chamber," then presided over by Laud. He appears to have met with comparatively kind treatment. Dr. White, Bishop of Ely, was requested by the king to answer Bradbourne. In the preface to the book which he wrote in compliance with the request, he dedicates

the work to Laud, and thus refers to Bradbourne's trial: "At his appearance your Lordship did not confute him with fire and fagot, with halter, axe, or scourging; but according to the usual procedure of your Grace and that court, with delinquents who are overtaken with error in simplicity, there was yielded unto him a deliberate, patient, and full hearing, together with a satisfactory answer to all his main objections. The man perceiving that the principles which the Sabbatarian dogmatists had lent him were not orthodox, he began to suspect that the holy brethren *who had lent him his principles, and yet persecuted his conclusions, might perhaps be deceived in the first as he had been in the last*¹." *O si sic omnia!* one is impelled to exclaim as one reads of such reasonable methods with a heretic. The result was that Bradbourne recanted, and conformed to the Episcopal Church.

It is generally supposed that Seventh-day Sabbatarianism took its rise among the Anabaptists. Undoubtedly it was among the early Baptist congregations that the tenet found most acceptance, and was more practically carried out.

But in its origin it formed no part of Anabaptist principles. I have not, in the course of rather extensive reading, found any trace of it among the early Baptists of Germany and Holland. Still, as the Baptists of all sections held that only those observances, institutions, and rites, were lawful for which express warrant could be found in the Scriptures, it is easy to understand the development among them of churches based on the principle of the Seventh-day Sabbath. Before, however, we come to these we find, in the period when Bradbourne wrote his book, a body of Christians called "Traskites." It is sometimes said that these were Baptists, but of that I have found no proof, although it is true that they held the scrupulous view as to the necessity of Scriptural authority for ordinances, which led to the formation of Baptist Churches, and hence their principles and practice tended in the

¹ The italics are mine.

same direction. Their founder was a very remarkable man, named John Trask. He was originally a school-master in Somersetshire, where, according to Fuller, he applied to the bishop for holy orders, but was "refused as altogether insufficient" by Dr. John Ward, who at that time was "poser (*sic*) to the bishop." However, he afterwards got orders, and came to London in 1617. "He then began to vent his peculiar opinions; that the Lord's Day was to be observed with the same strictness as the Jewish Sabbath," and that all meats and drinks forbidden in the Scriptures were unlawful for Christians. It will be seen from this that Trask at first held that Sunday was the true Sabbath; how he changed his mind about this will soon appear. In one of the editions of that rare old book, Ephraim Pagitt's *Hereticks and Sectaries*, there is—apparently by another hand than Pagitt's¹—a full account of Mr. John Trask and his followers, which, although some allowance has to be made for the writer's prejudices, is, no doubt, trustworthy as to the main facts, which indeed are corroborated from other sources. Like other books of the sort belonging to the same stormy period, it is valuable for the pictures it gives of the different parties and sects, and the general state of religious life. Trask was a preacher of extraordinary power. Old Fuller says he had heard him preach, and that when his auditors had forgotten the matter, they must have remembered the manner, of his discourse, as the "loudness of the stentorian voice had more strength than anything else which he delivered." Soon after his coming to London he became a zealous Nonconformist. "He divided men into three estates; (1) the state of nature, (2) the state of repentance, (3) the state of grace. According to these

¹ He was minister of St. Edmund's, Lombard Street, in the city of London. His book exhibits a natural bias against the "Sectaries." But the part dealing with the Traskites is written in a fair and candid, although adverse, tone which makes me think this particular history was not the work of "Old Father Pagitt." The date of the book is 1635.

three degrees was the order of preaching. To recover men out of a state of nature, he preached repentance so earnestly that he caused many of his hearers to weep, yea roar, in such a manner that "the inhabitants of the city were disturbed many times in the night-season by his converts." He himself "prayed so loud both in the city and in the field as if he would have pierced the heavens." He portrayed repentance as a "deep humiliation." Conversion and the new birth of the soul was an experience "as sensible as the travail of a woman or the taking of the heart out of the body by a chirurgeon, so that many by his preaching were at their wits' end, and spared not to pull down their bodies by fasting, watching, and hard labour. Some proceeded so far as to fast three whole days together." All this was encouraged, indeed prescribed, by Trask as a means to bring men into a state of grace. Some of his followers clothed themselves in sackcloth, cast their money into the street, and sold their possessions in order to distribute the proceeds to the poor. Conversion in those days was not the easy and comfortable matter it is made now by our modern Evangelical revivalists. Trask even ordained evangelists, and sent them out as missionaries of his gospel. One of these was Hamlet Jackson, a tailor by trade, who soon went further than his master in his scriptural punctiliousness. He believed that the word of God contained directions, commands, and rules, for all the conduct and business of life ; that it regulates our diet, our clothing, and all the useful arts and sciences, such as planting, building, weaving, medicine, &c. In fact, nothing in Church or State, in the household, or in society, was right unless it was in accordance with the express command or warrant of Scripture. Deut. xiv. and Lev. xi. were especially appealed to. In this way came the ceremonial laws and the peculiar dress of the members of Trask's Church ; and, of course, their keeping Saturday as the only true Sabbath. For Jackson converted his master to his views, and the result was that the Traskites insisted on

treating Sunday as a common working day. This and their militant Dissent soon brought them into conflict with the authorities in Church and State. Trask himself was brought before the Star Chamber, where, we are told, he was refuted by Bishop Andrewes. He was sentenced to be set in the pillory at Westminster, and thence whipped at the cart-tail to the Fleet Prison. This infamous sentence was carried out, and poor Trask lay three years in the Fleet, and then, broken in spirit and in bodily strength, he recanted, and was set at liberty.

His most interesting convert was his own wife. She was, her opponents being judges, not so much a fanatic as "a woman endowed with many particular virtues," a heroine indeed and a philanthropist. She lived near the "Fleet Bridge" which was situated at the bottom of the present Fleet Street, and crossed the "Fleet ditch" which then ran between Fleet Street and Holborn. Here Mrs. Trask opened a school in her own house, a sketch of which will surely interest many readers, as showing what a "dame's school" was like, and what primary education might mean, nearly three hundred years ago. She would only "teach the children on five days in the week, for on Saturday she would not teach as that was her Sabbath, and on Sunday she durst not." Her price was fourpence per week, and "under that she would not teach; yet if any of the parents were poor she would sometimes send them part of that price back againe," as she would also in "the case of some scholars for whom she thought she deserved not so much." She did all this, we read, "out of conscience and as believing that she must one day be judged for all the things done in the flesh." She would not receive any child whose parents did not send him, or her, to school punctually at seven o'clock in the morning, and send the child's breakfast at nine o'clock! We are not told what time in the day school was out; let us hope it was a morning school only. The result of Mrs. Trask's system is thus told by the author to whom we are so much indebted for our

information: "There was hardly found any that could equal her for so speedy bringing children to read. She taught a son of mine who had only learned his letters in another place, at the age of four years, in the space of nine months, so that he was fit for the Latin into which he was then entered." Parents were so eager to send their children to her that her school would have been crowded, but for her strict rule only to receive as many as she could properly teach, although many were waiting their turn for admission. And what became of this good and capable woman? What did the Established Church, and, afterwards, the Parliament, do with her? Let our author tell in his own words:—

"At last for teaching five days a week and resting on the Saturday, it being known on what grounds she did it, she was carried to the new prison in Maiden Lane." Here she remained a prisoner till the Parliament in 1640 dissolved that prison, and she was removed to the "Gatehouse," as the jail in Westminster was called. It was situate not far from the Abbey Church, and from contemporary accounts of it must have been a squalid and miserable place. And yet the poor prisoners had to pay for their accommodation such as it was; they were indeed "farmed" by the jailer. Mrs. Trask refused to receive alms as the unfortunate inmates were permitted to do, such charity being in many cases all that they had to save them from starvation. She declined this aid because she held that it would have been "a dishonour to God whom she served." She would "eat her own bread," she said, meaning what she could earn by sweeping the rooms and doing other little services for her fellow-prisoners; and this with an annuity of "forty shillings per year was all her maintenance." She was a vegetarian and a total abstainer for many years. While she was in the Gatehouse one Paul Best was committed there for denying the Trinity. One merciful feature there was in prison life in those bad old days. The solitary and silent system was hardly heard of. Prisoners were allowed to converse together.

We can imagine the relief it was to a woman like Mrs. Trask to hold thoughtful discourse at times with a man who must have had some independence of mind and force of character. "This man," says our historian, "notwithstanding her natural obstinacy, wherein she was invincible to others, was able to prevail with her and persuade her from bad to worse. She began to incline to his opinions; and also to eat and drink like other people by his persuasion." But it would seem that the change of diet brought on an illness of which she died. One more circumstance connected with her imprisonment we must not withhold. From a comparison of dates, and collation of historical facts, it is certain that Richard Lovelace was for a short time, on account of his royalist sympathies, a fellow-prisoner with Mrs. Trask in the Gatehouse. Readers will remember the poem *To Althea, from Prison*, in which occur the much admired lines:—

Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet, take
That for a hermitage.

The Cavalier poet was soon released on parole; but there was one prisoner who lived for sixteen years in the Gatehouse, and died in that prison, who it is more than probable sometimes swept out the poet's room, made his bed and prepared his meals, whose mind was "innocent and quiet." Innocent she was of all but some heresies and peculiarities of opinion; and quiet with the strength of conscientious resolve to bear any loss or trial that duty to God and man might impose. It may be that the poet had seen in her calm strong face and her brave submission to her hard lot the truth which he expressed so well to *Althea*.

The last words of the old chronicler about Mrs. Trask are a characteristic and painful illustration of the length of unconscious and almost blasphemous impiety to which good men have been led by the *odium theologicum*. He

says plainly that she was no doubt damned, notwithstanding her many virtues. And in proof of the possibility of such an issue of a good life he quotes St. Paul on charity! "To do all manner of good," he says, "and suffer all manner of evil, out of any other motive than love towards God and our brethren availeth little to salvation."

It must have been near about the time when John Trask recanted and his wife was imprisoned that the principle of the Seventh-day Sabbath began to find considerable acceptance and practical compliance among the Baptist Churches of London, and in some of the western and south-western counties of England. And soon we find churches referred to which are known as "Sabbatarian" or "Seventh-day congregations." One of the earliest of these was that which met in the little meeting-house in Bullstake Alley, Whitechapel. But nearly all that we know about it is in connexion with the tragic fate of its first minister, John James, whose little known story well deserves to be told. In telling it we shall have to borrow largely from a little book in the possession of the British Museum, of which probably not many copies exist. John James' origin was as humble as that of Bunyan, and like him he belonged to the class whom Sydney Smith stigmatized as "inspired tinkers, shoemakers, &c." He was so puny in body that he had to give up the calling of a "small coal-man," his strength being unequal to the hard labour of it. He learned the art of weaving silk ribbons, which had been recently introduced by the persecuted and fugitive Huguenots. But in that small and deformed body of his there dwelt an indomitable soul, and his intellectual powers were of no mean order. The last scenes in his life are of deep interest, showing us the portrait of a true hero of faith who died a martyr to his ideals and dreams, and affording a striking picture of the state of things in England about the time when the Pilgrim Fathers were harried out of their country.

The congregation had met for worship as usual in the

afternoon of Saturday, Oct. 19, 1661. At three o'clock, Mr. James was in the pulpit preaching his sermon from 1 Cor. vi. 20, "Ye are not your own, &c." Suddenly the service was interrupted by the entrance of Justice Chard and the head constable, Mr. Wood. The latter, in a loud voice, called on the minister to come down from the pulpit for having "committed treason against the king." Mr. James, taking as little notice as possible, went on preaching. The constable then came nearer and repeated his demand, declaring that if the preacher did not come down he would "pull him down." The disturbance now became general and the minister was compelled to stop, but he declared he was there "in the name of the King of Kings, and he would not come down unless forced to do so." Whereupon the constable ascended the pulpit stairs, laid hold of the little minister and literally dragged him down to the floor of the house and led him forth in custody into the street. Here there was soon a great uproar, for the cry of "Treason! Treason!" was raised, and the people ran together from all parts. More constables were called, and James was conveyed under guard to a public-house near by. Here some soldiers and other lewd fellows amused themselves by mocking the tone and language of the Anabaptists, saying, "I drink to thee in the spirit." Rebuked for their ribaldry by the officers they replied: "We would only speak a few words to him in the spirit."

Meanwhile most of the male members of the congregation were taken into custody and were being examined in batches of seven. Those who would take the oath were set at liberty. Those who would not swear allegiance to the king were committed to Newgate prison. Having dispatched this business in the Half Moon Tavern, a place near the Tower, the magistrates entered the meeting-house and seated themselves about the communion table. Here they had James and some of the female members of his flock brought before them for examination. Witnesses were called, some of whom were believed to have been paid

large sums to swear that they had heard the preacher speak treasonable words against the king. The women denied that any such words had ever been spoken. But in the end John James was committed a close prisoner to Newgate on a charge of High Treason.

The next scene opens in the King's Bench Court at Westminster. Here James was placed upon his trial before no less than four judges, Lord Chief Justice Forster and Justices Mallet, Twisden, and Windam being on the Bench. Arrayed against one poor Baptist minister at the bar were the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General, and four King's Counsel! The little man bore himself bravely, and showed that if he was a fanatic he was no fool or harebrained visionary. He took exception to the indictment on a point of law, citing several rulings of the Court which supported his contention that he ought to have been served, and was not, with a copy of the indictment. The objection was overruled against him. He then consented to plead "not guilty." Asked after the old way how he would be tried, he answered: "By the laws of God." "Whereupon," we are told, "the lawyers gave a great hisse." Commanded to plead according to due form: "By God and the country," James demanded to know what those terms might mean? "By God," said the judge, "is meant the laws of God, and by country is meant twelve good men of Middlesex." The witnesses were the same as on his examination before the magistrates. They had heard James, when they were listening outside his chapel call the king a "bloodthirsty tyrant," and declare that the "ruin of his kingdom was near." Then they were asked if they had heard him say anything about "Fighting the Lord's battles"? They answered that they had forgotten to state that he did say that "when they had the power again they must use it more thoroughly." The prisoner was now called upon for his defence—he a poor deformed, weak, creature against the whole bench of judges and six of the leading counsel of the day!

But he was equal to the situation and undaunted still. He called witnesses who swore that they had heard the witnesses for the prosecution admit that they had been told what to say and then affrighted or bribed into saying it! The crown witnesses were recalled and denied that they had ever admitted anything of the sort. James then called witnesses who had been present on the occasions referred to, and who swore that no such words had ever dropped from his lips! The Lord Chief Justice now bade the jury to take notice of what had been said on both sides; and then told James that he "was free to speak for himself as long and as much as he pleased," but that "when he had concluded he would be allowed to speak no more." We can imagine the sensations of the poor weaver as he stood before that august tribunal and felt that the eyes of all London were on him. Nothing but a full and real belief, however mistaken, in the truth and justice of his cause, could have upheld him, suspecting as he must have done, that he was fore-doomed. He felt himself the servant and minister of another king who would yet take the kingdoms of this world for his own and make the whole world the kingdom of God. "He spoke," we are told, "with much liberty," the Court and all present giving attention to what he said. He traversed all the charge against him and denied all. So far from "harbouring even a malicious thought against the king, he desired nothing so much as the salvation of his soul." Then turning directly to the jury he appealed to them "not to be overawed by any man and to be tender of shedding innocent blood." He concluded by saying that they were his real judges as to matters of fact. He would say no more for himself "but one word for the Lord." He was "the poorest and meanest for such a work, but he was called forth and should declare: That the Lord Jesus Christ was King of nations as well as of saints; and that the government of all kingdoms did by divine right belong to him." And here he sought to give them one or two

"Scriptures," quoting Rev. xi. 15-18. Now the Lord Chief Justice stopped him, exclaiming: "Hold, Sirrah, Sirrah! You think you are in the conventicle in Whitechapel preaching." This and a few legal formalities finished the trial. James was found guilty of high treason, but sentence was postponed until the following day, the third of the proceedings.

Brought up for sentence he was asked in the usual way if he had anything to say, &c. He replied that he had not much to say, only "a few more Scriptures which he would leave with them." Here he quoted Jer. v. 13, 14 and Ps. cxvi. 15. His last word should be: "Jesus Christ is King of England, Ireland, Scotland, and all the countries of earth."

Then they silenced him, and the Chief Justice formally condemned him to death. The actual words of the sentence are so atrocious that I hesitate to reproduce them. But for the sake of their historical interest as showing what men had to endure in the bad old days for mere pious opinions, the naked truth ought to appear. The Judge said, "John James, thou art to be carried from hence to the prison, and from thence to the place of execution and there to be hanged by the neck, and, being yet alive, thy bowels to be taken out (a fire having been prepared beforehand) and to be burned before thy face. Thy head to be severed from thy body and thy body quartered; thy head and body to be disposed according to the king's pleasure." James had only time to exclaim: "Blessed be God! whom man hath condemned he hath justified." It is harrowing to read that even the above horrible sentence was not all that remained for him to endure. In the few days that were left for him to live he suffered cruel wrongs at the hands of his jailers. They were continually demanding money of him and compelling him to pay for his accommodation. One of these harpies claimed his coat and took it from his back, afterwards offering to sell it to him. The poor prisoner replied that "the clothes they had left him would

serve as they would so soon have his life." Most horrible of all to relate, the hangman came to him the day before his execution, and demanded money "that he might be favourable unto him at his death." Then ensued an attempt at bargaining, which there is good reason to believe had many parallels in the execrable conditions of prison life at the time. "How much will satisfy you?" said the prisoner. "Twenty pounds," was the answer. On James pleading his poverty the price fell to ten pounds, and when the man found that he could not wring that sum out of his victim, he demanded five pounds, threatening that if that sum were not forthcoming he would "torture him exceedingly" at his execution. "I must leave that to your mercy" was all the answer the prisoner could give. It is a little relief to read that all the scenes in Newgate were not of the same character. The minister's friends—and, more than all, his wife—were permitted to visit him in the "Press-yard." This was the common yard within the prison walls, where the prisoners were allowed some liberty, and all sorts of them were permitted to herd together. Here, too, the poorest of them who could not afford to pay for better quarters were often left by day and night exposed to the rain and the cold.

Sentence had been passed on James on the Seventh-day, the day that he believed to be, in an especial sense, the Lord's day. On the first day a number of his people gathered around him in the "Press-yard"; and here he finished the sermon which had been so rudely interrupted in the meeting-house. It was founded on the text, "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 20). His great object was to show that "they should glorify God in the body by giving it up to suffer for righteousness' sake."

What a scene was this! The little congregation—some of whom were prisoners themselves for refusing to take the oath which they believed to be forbidden by Christ—gathered around their pastor for the last time; his wife,

constant and faithful unto death, standing by his side ; and on the outskirts of the little group, a crowd of other poor prisoners, some of them no doubt brutalized by vice and crime, grinning at the scene ; some of them perhaps " more sinned against than sinning," touched with the tragedy and pathos of it, their eyes lighted with a gleam of hope as they listened to a sermon from a dying man. Not many days after the little minister was led out from Newgate into the midst of a howling and blaspheming mob who were waiting for his appearance. Then, guarded by soldiers on every side, he was placed bound hand and foot on a sledge to which a team of horses were attached. He was thus dragged through what is now Holborn and Oxford Street to the place of execution, the soldiers riding on each side of him and half suffocating him with the mud from their horses' hoofs ; and the crowd bordering all the route with their hard and cruel faces. Only here and there did a look of pity or sympathy light upon him, and none dared speak a word of cheer. So the first minister of the Whitechapel Seventh-day Baptist church went to his death, " not at all dismayed or terrified, but with a sweet smiling countenance." When the cavalcade reached Tyburn he was made to mount the scaffold, a sort of platform raised some feet above the heads of the immense crowd that thronged around, pushing and trampling upon one another in their eagerness to get a good view of the tragedy about to be enacted upon that stage. On this platform the gallows was erected, which generally, as old prints show, was constructed with two stout posts and a strong cross-beam at the top ; but sometimes there was only one post, or tree, with an arm extending a few feet from the top. Against the cross-beam or the arm of the " gallows-tree " a ladder was placed which the doomed man had to ascend, and on the top of which he stood till the executioner, who followed him up the ladder, had adjusted the rope about his neck ; when he was literally flung off by the hangman's hands.

Standing on such a scaffold, the fire burning near ready

to receive his bowels, and the rope dangling above his head, John James asked and obtained leave to say a few last words to the people. He first of all repelled a foolish charge that had been made against him of being a Jesuit in disguise. Then he declared that he was a baptized believer, owning the "six principles" mentioned in Heb. vi. 1, 2. Next he acknowledged that he was bound by the commandments and ordinances of Christ, including the Decalogue; and that he "durst not break one of the commandments to save his life." "I do own," he went on to say, "the Lord's holy Sabbath, the seventh day of the week."

He declared once more his belief in the coming kingdom of Christ, and that it would not be merely a spiritual kingdom; but he solemnly averred his entire innocence of any seditious or treasonable intent. "The Lord, before whom I stand," he said, "and with whom I shall shortly be, knows that I am innocent of that with which I am accused, as to matter of fact." Then he prayed, and the words of his prayer were taken down, and have been preserved. We read how he besought the Lord, among other things, that he would "bless the poor witnesses, and, as they had sought to imbrue their hands in his blood, so might they be washed in the blood of the Lamb." Then he entreated the Lord "for the poor executioner who was to destroy him:" and, finally, he prayed God to bless "our righteous Redeemer, and give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the kingdoms of the earth for a possession."

With that extraordinary prayer to God for his Son Jesus Christ, John James finished his earthly course.

It is comforting to read that the sheriff and the executioner were "civil to him." The very hangman was more merciful to him than his judges. He let him die before cutting him down, and inflicting upon him the indescribable barbarities of the full sentence. His head, as if to complete the tale of horror, was fixed upon a pole planted opposite the alley in which his chapel was situated.

The story of the Sabbatarian congregations and of the sufferings of their confessors does not end with the death of John James. About twenty years after that time a still more notable man was committed to Newgate for holding the same opinions, or rather for teaching them openly in London. This was Francis Bampfeild, who from being a distinguished scholar at Oxford, and then a cavalier and high Tory clergyman, became a Seventh-day Baptist, and preached the doctrine with extraordinary power and success. He was a member of one of the oldest and most respected families in Devonshire. Prince, in his *Worthies of Devon*, tells us that "The honourable family of Bampfeild hath matched into several noble families, as Beauchamp, Cobham, St. Maur, Clifford, and others." In Exeter there is a Bampfeild Street with a fine old mansion named Bampfeild House, once the city residence of the family. Prince further tells us that "the Bampfeild family had always been very eminent on account of hospitality and zeal for religion." Francis was the third son of James Bampfeild of Poltimore, and was destined for the Church by his parents from his childhood. At the age of eighteen he matriculated at Oxford, and entered Wadham College. In one year he took his degree of B.A., and proceeded M.A. at the age of twenty-one. He was distinguished especially for his knowledge of Hebrew. He was ordained on leaving college, and in 1640 was presented to the living of Rampisham in Dorset. In 1641 he was made a canon of Exeter. In his parish he laboured with so much devotion, assiduity, and faithfulness, that he overcame all opposition, and the village became a model one for sobriety, virtue, and religiousness. In 1653 he accepted the living of Sherborne, although the income was much less than that of Rampisham, which he resigned. And here, in the grand old abbey church, he preached for some years to crowds of people, who gathered every Sunday, drawn by his eloquence and earnestness. On the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, he declined to conform,

and was ejected from his living. It was not long, as we might expect, before he was arrested for breaches of the penal laws against Nonconformist ministers, and consigned to Dorchester jail. But here he was allowed to preach to his fellow-prisoners, many of whom, no doubt, were such as, like himself, were sufferers for conscience' sake. There must have been, however, many persons in the north and west of England who held "Sabbatarian" principles, as there is extant among his writings a sort of circular letter addressed to the Seventh-day churches of the south and west of England. Indeed, he formed a congregation on the same principles in the jail itself. Soon afterwards he was set at liberty, and removed to London, where he had a congregation in the neighbourhood of Shoreditch. I have not been able to ascertain the precise locality of the first Meeting House, but the Church soon after worshipped in Pinner's Hall and continued to meet there long after his death. There is evidence of his great power and success as a preacher, which I cannot reproduce here. That he was an eccentric and somewhat fanatical man is shown by his books. One of these is entitled *All in One*, and the sub-title sets forth its doctrine that "all useful sciences and profitable arts are comprehended and discovered in the fullness and perfection of Scripture knowledges." According to him the technical "knowledges" for even such arts as music and carpentry are contained in the Bible; and within the literal sense of all its contents there is a spiritual and celestial meaning. The best teaching of the work is that all men in all kinds of offices, high or low, ought to regard their duty as spiritual or religious service rendered to God and man. He is said to have baptized himself by immersion at Salisbury. He not only believed in extempore prayer, but also in extempore praise. Why should men sing to God, any more than pray to him in set forms? Wood, in his *Athenae Oxonienses*, tells us that Bampfieild "was at first a Churchman, then a Presbyterian, afterwards an Independent and a Baptist, and at length almost a complete Jew." The

latter part of the statement only shows how blindly a prejudiced mind could distort facts. Bampfild was a thorough believer in Christ; but, of course, held that the Fourth Commandment was binding on Christians, and accepted many other precepts and usages of the Jewish religion. In London he was too active and powerful to remain long undisturbed by the authorities in Church and State. He was thrown into Newgate prison, and there he remained, refusing to take the oath of allegiance, the condition on which he might have been released, not because he was disloyal or rebellious, but because he believed oaths to be direct acts of disobedience to Christ.

He died in prison Feb. 16, 1683. He is described as a man of noble and gracious manners. A just and candid mind, with all due allowance for excesses of zeal and curiosities of opinion, will see in him one of the heroes and martyrs of faith. More than a decade of years spent amidst the loathsome horrors of prison life as it was then, was a protracted martyrdom. He wrote his own epitaph, which I transcribe for its pathetic epitome of his life.

While I on pilgrimage did sojourn here,
Reproach and captive bonds did still attend me.
I spent in prison more than twice five years;
A full seventh part of the time my God did lend me.
But now, made free of New Jerusalem,
I've changed my prison for a diadem.

The subsequent history of the "Sabbatarian" movement in England must be very briefly told, and it is one of gradual decline. Our only sources of knowledge are a few scanty references in Nonconformist congregational records and biographies. All we know is that, from the Commonwealth down to the beginning of the present century, there were a few churches in London which were distinguished as Seventh-day congregations. They met for worship regularly every Saturday, and their members, of course, were at liberty to work or carry on business on Sundays. As a matter of fact they generally made Sunday a day of rest

and recreation. Among these congregations was that first gathered by Bampfieid, and one of his successors in the ministry, the Rev. Jos. Stennett, was a man of considerable attainments and poetic talent. He was the author of the well-known hymn :—

Another six days' work is done,
Another Sabbath is begun ;
Return my soul, enjoy thy rest,
Improve the day thy God hath blest.

In beautiful words this hymn sets forth the spiritual meaning of the Sabbath, to which the cessation of all labour and earthly business is subservient :—

This heavenly calm within the breast
Is the dear pledge of endless rest,
Which for the church of God remains,
The end of cares, the end of pains.

In holy duties let the day,
In holy pleasures pass away ;
How sweet a sabbath thus to spend,
In hope of one that ne'er shall end.

The day Stennett was thinking of was the seventh day of the week.

W. E. MELLONE.